

**H. Härtel, V. Čílek, T. Herben, A. Jackson & R. Williams [Eds.]: SANDSTONE LANDSCAPES.** – Academia in collaboration with Bohemian Switzerland, National Park Administration and Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, Prague 2007, 493 p., ISBN 978-80-200-1577-87.

Sandstone areas are among the most attractive sites in the world to visit for the general public, professional photographers and artists, practitioners of various sports, as well as scientists. The team of authors treated by the five editors includes 109 contributors from research institutions across Europe. They have differentiated the subject of the book into four coherent parts, each of which is itself subdivided into several chapters. The aim of the edition is declared in its Foreword: "...as a pioneer attempt to take a general look at the sandstone phenomenon where the substrate, climate, life and human activity all participate in creating a single system intertwined by a complex network of feedbacks and interrelationships at multiple levels." The basis of the book consists of presentations made at the international symposium "Sandstone Landscapes – Diversity, Ecology and Conservation" held in Bohemian and Saxon Switzerland (National Park) in 2002.

The first part of the book examines sandstones as nature's "building material", and investigates their geological essence, long-term landform development, weathering and climate influences. The second part is concentrated on various phenomena of biodiversity and/or relationships between flora or fauna and geodiversity. Specific views are provided on sandstone habitats, such as ecological (rocky) islands, phytogeographical refuges, districts of denudation/sedimentation dynamics, or sensitive biotopes for invasions of allochthonous species. The third part describes sandstone landscape as perceptual and living spaces for humans from ancient times through the Middle Ages to the present time. A substantial component of the book's fourth part is a geographic overview of Europe's major sandstone areas. Useful appendices include a terminological index, a rich collection of reference sources, and a coloured map of European sandstone districts.

The strengths of this book include that it is a very serious and detailed study of one ecosystem and landscape phenomenon. The coverage is varied, as is common in most books edited by multiple authors. The monograph does come across as the collection of essays that it is, and it may have benefited from a more thematic approach. It brings together a large volume of material on these sites. There is a lot of good material in the book that is useful with regard to ecological theory and ecosystem management. I expect that this book will be read by many professional nature protectionists and naturalists who need detailed information on spontaneous processes in sandstone nature and landscape development. I believe it will also be used as a kind of textbook for students, practitioners and/or stakeholders in the Czech Republic. It is admirably suited for these purposes.

*Pavel Kovář*

